

Local Educational Agency Liaisons

Who is homeless? (Sec. 725)

The term “homeless children and youth”–

(A) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence ...; and

(B) includes–

(i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;

(ii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings ...

(iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and

(iv) migratory children who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

This document was collaboratively developed by:

National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEH CY)—512-475-8765—www.naehcy.org

National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE)—800-308-2145—www.serve.org/nche

National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH)—202-737-6444 ext. 18—www.nationalhomeless.org

National Law Center for Homelessness and Poverty (NLCHP)—202-638-2535—www.nlchp.org

National Network for Youth (NN4Y)—202-783-7949—www.NN4Youth.org

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (Subtitle B—Education for Homeless Children and Youth), reauthorized in January 2002, ensures educational rights and protections for children and youth experiencing homelessness. This brief explains the legislation and offers strategies for implementing it in a school district. Additional briefs on various topics in the law may be found on the websites of the organizations listed below.

Key Provisions

- ☐ Every Local Educational Agency (LEA), otherwise known as school district, must designate an appropriate staff person as a liaison for students in homeless situations. This person may also be a coordinator for other federal programs.
- ☐ Liaisons must ensure that:
 - ☐ Children and youth in homeless situations are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies.
 - ☐ Students enroll in, and have full and equal opportunity to succeed in, the schools of the LEA.
 - ☐ Families, children, and youth receive educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start, Even Start, and pre-school programs administered by the LEA, and referrals to health, mental health, dental, and other appropriate services.
 - ☐ Parents or guardians are informed of educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.
 - ☐ Public notice of the educational rights of students in homeless situations is disseminated where children and youth receive services under the Act.
 - ☐ Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with the Enrollment Disputes section of the McKinney-Vento Act.
 - ☐ Parents and guardians and unaccompanied youth are fully informed of all transportation services, including to the school of origin, and are assisted in accessing transportation services.
- ☐ Liaisons must assist children and youth who do not have immunizations or immunization or medical records to obtain necessary immunizations or immunization or medical records.
- ☐ Liaisons must help unaccompanied youth choose and enroll in a school, after considering the youths’ wishes, and provide youth with notice of their right to appeal an enrollment decision that is not their choice.

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- ❑ Liaisons must ensure that unaccompanied youth are immediately enrolled in school pending resolution of disputes that might arise over school enrollment or placement.
- ❑ Liaisons must collaborate and coordinate with State Coordinators for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth and community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to children and youth in homeless situations.
- ❑ State coordinators and LEAs must inform school personnel, service providers, and advocates who work with families in homeless situations of the duties of the LEA homeless liaison.

(See Endnotes for the text of the law.)

Liaisons are LEA staff responsible for ensuring the identification, school enrollment, attendance, and opportunities for academic success of students in homeless situations. Some of these activities may be accomplished by the liaison himself or herself, while others are accomplished by coordinating the efforts of other staff. National evaluations have found that liaisons are a common denominator for successful district efforts to address homelessness. Therefore, the law now requires every LEA to appoint a liaison for students who are homeless and specifies their legal responsibilities. By linking students and their families to school and community services, liaisons play a critical role in stabilizing students and promoting academic achievement at the individual, school, and district level.

Strategies for implementation

- ❑ LEA administrators should work with the Office of State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth to identify an appropriate staff person to serve as local educational agency homeless liaison. Federal programs, such as Title I, Even Start, or Migrant Education, may be good offices to support this position. State programs for students in high-risk situations may also be appropriate.
- ❑ LEAs and State Coordinators should create opportunities for the designated liaison to receive training, in particular on homelessness, the legal responsibilities of the liaison, and key provisions of the McKinney-Vento Act. Training opportunities may be facilitated by the State Coordinators for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth through attendance at local, state, and national conferences, through neighboring school districts that have established local homeless liaison positions, and through materials such as Local Homeless Education Toolkit (see Resources, last page). Issue briefs on school selection, enrollment, transportation, dispute resolution, identification, and unaccompanied youth will be particularly useful for liaisons.
- ❑ Liaisons should join local homeless task forces, homeless coalitions, and their local homeless assistance Continuum of Care. A

Endnotes

“State Plan—(1) In General—Each State shall submit to the Secretary a plan to provide for the education of homeless children and youths within the State. Such plan shall include the following: (J) Assurances that...

(ii) local educational agencies will designate an appropriate staff person, who may also be a coordinator for other Federal programs, as a local educational agency liaison for homeless children and youths, to carry out the duties described in paragraph (6)(A)...

(3) Local Educational Agency Requirements—

...(B) Best Interest—In determining the best interest of the child or youth... the local educational agency shall...

(iii) in the case of an unaccompanied youth, ensure that the homeless liaison designated under paragraph (1)(J)(ii) assists in placement or enrollment decisions under this subparagraph, considers the views of such unaccompanied youth, and provides notice to such youth of the right to appeal under subparagraph (E)...

(C) Enrollment—

...(iii) If the child or youth needs to obtain immunizations, or immunization or medical records, the enrolling school shall immediately refer the parent or guardian of the child or youth to the local educational agency liaison designated under paragraph (1)(J)(ii), who shall assist in obtaining necessary immunizations, or immunization or medical records, in accordance with subparagraph (D).

(E) Enrollment Disputes—If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment in a school—

(iii) the child, youth, parent, or guardian shall be referred to the local educational agency liaison designated under paragraph (1)(J)(ii), who shall carry out the dispute resolution process as described in paragraph (1)(C) as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute; and (iv) in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the homeless liaison shall ensure that the youth

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Local Educational Agency Liaisons (continued)

directory of state and local homeless coalitions may be found at the NCH website at www.nationalhomeless.org/state.

- ❑ State Coordinators should provide the liaison with sample forms, policies, procedures, awareness materials (for example, brochures and posters), and fact sheets so that he or she does not have to “re-invent the wheel” and will be well equipped to start his or her job. Sample materials may be found in the *Local Homeless Education Toolkit; Imagine the Possibilities: A Sourcebook for Educators Committed to the Educational Success of Students in Homeless Situations* and on the website of the National Center for Homeless Education at www.serve.org/nche.
- ❑ Liaisons should develop relationships with community social service providers, including shelters, soup kitchens, food banks, transitional living projects for youth, street outreach teams, youth drop-in centers, community action agencies, welfare departments, housing departments, public health departments, and faith-based organizations. They should inform these agencies of the duties of the liaison, the responsibilities of the school district, and the rights of students and families who are homeless.
- ❑ Liaisons should develop relationships with key school personnel, including administrators, principals, secretaries, registrars, counselors, social workers, transportation staff, food services staff, school nurses, truancy officers, and teachers. They should inform these personnel about the causes and consequences of homelessness, symptoms of homelessness, the duties of the liaison, the responsibilities of the school district, and the rights of students and families who are homeless.
- ❑ Liaisons should develop relationships with local directors of other school programs, such as preschool, Special Education, School Meals, Title I, Migrant Education, Neglected and Delinquent, and Even Start to ensure that students who are homeless can access those services as needed.
- ❑ Liaisons should disseminate posters, brochures, and other awareness materials explaining educational rights, programs, and related services in schools and other locations where children and youth receive services (such as soup kitchens, health clinics, shelters, transitional living projects for youth, street outreach teams, youth drop-in centers, motels, campgrounds, public laundries, and faith-based organizations). Posters for parents and for unaccompanied youth may be found on the NCHE website at www.serve.org/nche.
- ❑ Liaisons should seek program support from Title I programs, other education programs, and public and private community organizations.
- ❑ LEAs should communicate verbal and written information in a manner and language that parents, guardians, caregivers, and youth can understand.

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is immediately enrolled in school pending resolution of the dispute.”

McKinney-Vento Act Sec. 722(g); 42 U.S.C. 11432(g)

(6) Local Educational Agency Liaison.—

(A) Duties—Each local educational agency liaison for homeless children and youths, designated under paragraph (1)(J)(ii), shall ensure that—

(i) homeless children and youths are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies;

(ii) homeless children and youths enroll in, and have full and equal opportunity to succeed in, schools of that local educational agency;

(iii) homeless families, children, and youths receive educational services for which such families, children, and youths are eligible, including Head Start and Even Start programs and preschool programs administered by the local educational agency, and referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services, and other appropriate services;

(iv) the parents or guardians of homeless children and youths are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children;

(v) public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youths is disseminated where such children and youth receive services under this Act, such as schools, family shelters, and soup kitchens;

(vi) enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with paragraph (3)(E); and

(vii) the parent or guardian of a homeless child or youth, and any unaccompanied youth, is fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin, as described in paragraph (1)(J)(iii), and is assisted in accessing transportation to the school that is selected under paragraph (3)(A).

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Local Educational Agency Liaisons (continued)

National evaluation and federal guidance materials that discuss the role of the liaison:

Anderson, Leslie et al. (1995). *An Evaluation of State and Local Efforts to Serve the Educational Needs of Homeless Children and Youth*. Washington, DC: Author.

United States Department of Education. (1995). *Preliminary Guidance for the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program Title VII, Subtitle B*. Washington, DC: Author.

Resources for Local Liaisons

Local Homeless Education Liaison Toolkit, published as a collaborative effort between the National Center for Homeless Education and the staff of Project HOPE, Virginia's Program for Educating Homeless Children and Youth. The toolkit is expected to be published in the summer of 2002 and may be ordered through the National Center for Homeless Education at 1-800-755-3277 or downloaded from the website at www.serve.org/nche.

Imagine the Possibilities: A Sourcebook for Educators Committed to the Educational Success of Students Experiencing Homelessness. 2001. San Francisco, CA: Beth Ann Berliner. 730 Harrison Street, San Francisco, CA 94107-1242. 415-565-3000. www.WestEd.org.

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(B) Notice—State coordinators established under subsection (d)(3) and local educational agencies shall inform school personnel, service providers, and advocates working with homeless families of the duties of the local educational agency liaisons.

(C) Local and State Coordination—Local educational agency liaisons for homeless children and youths shall, as a part of their duties, coordinate and collaborate with State coordinators and community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children and youths.”

McKinney-Vento Act Sec. 722(g)(6); 42 U.S.C. 11432(g)(6)

Every state is required to have a coordinator for the education of homeless children and youth, and every school district is required to have a liaison for homeless students. These individuals will assist you with the implementation of the McKinney-Vento Act. To find out who your state coordinator is, visit the NCHE website at www.serve.org/nche.

For further information on the McKinney-Vento Act and resources for implementation, call the NCHE HelpLine at 800-308-2145 or e-mail homeless@serve.org.

Local contact information: